

INFORMATION REPORT

CD NO 617943

COUNTRY East Germany
SUBJECT Shortages of Medical Supplies

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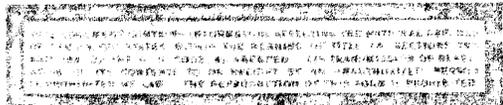
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The following abstracts were taken from the minutes of the Erfurt meeting of the Communist Affairs Professional Union (Erfurter Arbeiterliche Tagung der Gewerkschaft) Gesundheitswesen, held 20 April 1954. Minister of Health Luitpold Steidle, personnel chief of the Health Ministry, and local physicians attended the meeting. The conditions described allegedly have not been corrected as of late 1953.

- 1. Dr. Kaiser (fmu), director of the Land Women's Clinic in Erfurt, pointed out that the supply of radium was critically low. The Women's Clinic had only 120 milligrams of radiation material. The shortage delayed the treatment of carcinoma for four to five weeks, thus preventing attention at the most favorable time. On behalf of his patients and colleagues he had begged for assistance but had received no response. In answer to Kaiser, Minister Steidle stated that efforts were being made to obtain radiation material. If more radium was procured, the installations in Thuringia would receive priority in the distribution.
2. Dr. Weber (fmu), City Hospital and X-Ray Institute in Erfurt, repeated the charge that radium supplies were scarce and said he could not obtain enough to fill the requirements of his institute. The Institute had only one usable instrument for deep radiation. Diagnostic apparatus was antiquated and at least half of it would have to be discarded because of irreparable damage. Furthermore, he had requested four ventilators but had been supplied with only one. Weber said that he had brought these facts to the attention of his superiors.
3. Chief Physician Frau Dr. Albrecht (fmu), ENT Clinic, Erfurt, complained of the poor condition of equipment for ENT work and emphasized the critical role of instruments in that specialty. She recommended that new instruments be furnished to the clinics. A simple vocal cord polyp could no longer be removed without injuring the voice because the required instruments were in poor condition or not available. Damaged instruments were returned from repair shops in unusable condition. Trained technicians for medical instrument repair were unavailable. Dr. Albrecht said she had designed a special type of microscope which could not even be purchased in West Germany. Zeiss-Jena had promised to manufacture the instrument according to her design but had not done so. The job was then 18 months overdue. Dr. Albrecht also criticized the audiometer of a hearing aid on the DDR market. Her colleagues were of the opinion that the audiometers were very poor and some were useless. Dr. Albrecht further complained of the difficulties

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in obtaining the world's scientific literature. In response, Steidle promised to investigate the possibilities for improvement of instrument repair and to enter the complaint on the hearing aid to the appropriate ministry in Berlin.

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Dr. Zimmermann (fnu), physician at a private women's clinic in Erfurt, called attention to the shortage of target preparations. Hormones of the posterior pituitary were also scarce and corpus luteum hormone was unobtainable. Zimmermann asked Steidle directly: "May we, for patients with relatives in the West, write a prescription for drugs which we don't have, so that they can get them from their relatives, or would this make us liable to punishment?" Steidle replied that the act of writing a prescription for Western preparations was liable to punishment. However, relatives in the West could not be forbidden to send drugs to the patients. He added that he knew that some preparations were in short supply in the DDR but this was because the Americans had imposed an embargo on certain essential drugs in an effort to "starve the DDR." It would be some time before this situation was overcome.

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